

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 002481

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/29/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EPET](#) [VE](#) [EUN](#) [USEU](#) [BRUSSELS](#)

SUBJECT: EU DEBATING VENEZUELA POLICY

REF: A. A) STATE 117165

[B. B\) ROME 2184](#)

Classified By: USEU POLOFF TODD HUIZINGA, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On June 27, we delivered ref (A) demarche to Nicolas Pascual de la Parte (STRICTLY PROTECT), EU HighRep Javier Solana,s Adviser on Latin America. Pascual said that EU member states were now debating whether and how to engage or isolate Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. He predicted the EU would have a unified Venezuela policy by September-October; we believe the U.S. has a window of opportunity now to influence the EU's approach. Asked what the major EU concern is regarding Venezuela, Pascual exclaimed, "Oil." Regarding a possible Chavez tour of Europe, Pascual said Chavez had contacted a reluctant Romanian government several times about his interest in visiting the country. END SUMMARY.

EU VENEZUELA POLICY BY AUTUMN?

[1](#)2. (C) Pasqual (STRICTLY PROTECT) said that the EU was at a loss as to how to respond to the Chavez phenomenon. EU member states were debating, in the EU Working Group on Latin America (COLAT), on approaches to Chavez, such as whether to try to engage him more or to isolate him, but there was no consensus on the way forward. Many in the COLAT wanted to involve regional players, such as Brazil, but were unsure exactly how to proceed.

[1](#)3. (C) Within this context, Pasqual said, the European Commission was drafting a paper on Venezuela policy for the COLAT. Characterizing the paper as a "business as usual" Commission product concentrating on aid and development programs in Venezuela, Pascual said he intended to add a strategic dimension which would suggest ways to respond to the many challenges Chavez poses. On the basis of this paper, Pascual predicted the COLAT would reach consensus on Venezuela by September-October, with a fully approved common EU policy toward Venezuela soon to follow.

SPAIN WILL REMAIN IN DRIVER'S SEAT

[1](#)4. (C) Pascual said Spain, which carries the most weight in the EU on Latin America policy (including Venezuela), was uneasy about a possible common EU policy. At the moment, said Pascual, Spain preferred the flexibility it had in the absence of a binding EU approach. Pascual predicted that Spain would ultimately not obstruct the development of an EU-wide policy, but that that policy would be driven by Spain more than by any other member state. Thus, the EU policy would probably reflect Spain's preference for an approach of increased engagement and "constructive dialogue."

EU MAIN CONCERN: OIL

[1](#)5. (C) Pascual said unequivocally that the EU's main concern regarding Venezuela was oil. He downplayed U.S. concerns over regional destabilization and the Venezuelan military build-up, saying, &Chavez is not as important as he thinks he is.8 He agreed that terrorism and narco-trafficking were concerns, but not as central as oil.

CHAVEZ CALLING ROMANIA

[1](#)6. (C) Regarding a possible Chavez tour of European capitals, Pascual said that Chavez is "trying desperately to be received by Romania.8 He said that Chavez, despite at least one earlier unsuccessful attempt to solicit an invitation from Romania, had contacted the Government of Romania again two weeks ago saying he would like to visit; the GOR had not yet reached a decision. Pascual said Chavez' reasons for wanting to visit Romania were not known, but that he (Pascual) believed that Chavez wanted to try to harness some of Romania,s oil industry expertise. Pascual was unaware of any Chavez plans to visit any of the EU member states (see ref B on possible Chavez visit to Rome).

COMMENT: TIME RIPE TO ENGAGE EU ON VENEZUELA

17. (C) In a context of general perplexity as to how to approach the Chavez problem, the EU's internal debate on Venezuela is gathering steam. The U.S. has an opportunity now to shape that debate. Engaging Spain will be especially important: given Spain's influence within the EU on Latin America, the EU will likely ultimately come down in favor of increasing engagement with Chavez. END COMMENT.

MCKINLEY

.